

# Universal Precautions

Since 1987, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has recommended that blood and body fluid precautions, referred to as Universal Precautions, should be used for all patients.

Universal precautions are intended to prevent exposure of health-care workers to bloodborne disease. Under universal precautions, blood and certain body fluids of all patients are considered potentially infectious.

Universal precautions apply to:

- Blood and other body fluids containing visible blood.
- Semen and vaginal secretions
- Tissues
- Cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, peritoneal fluid and amniotic fluid

Universal precautions do **not** apply to:

- Feces
- Nasal secretions
- Sputum
- Sweat
- Tears
- Urine
- Vomit
- Saliva

1. Barrier protection should be used at all times to prevent skin and mucous membrane exposure to blood, body fluids containing visible blood, or other body fluids. Barrier protection should be used with all tissues.

Examples of protective barriers include gloves, gowns, masks and protective eyewear. The type of barrier protection used should be appropriate for the type of procedures being performed and the type of exposure anticipated.

2. Gloves are to be worn when there is potential for hand or skin contact with blood, other potentially infectious material, or items and surfaces contaminated with these materials.
3. Wash hands or other skin surfaces thoroughly and immediately if contaminated with blood, body fluids containing visible blood, or other body fluids to which universal precautions apply.
4. Wash hands immediately after gloves are removed.
5. Change gloves between patient contacts.
6. Do not wash or disinfect surgical or examination gloves for reuse.
7. General purpose utility gloves (i.e. rubber household gloves) should be used for housekeeping chores involving potential blood contact. Utility gloves can be decontaminated and reused. Gloves should be disposed of if they are peeling, cracked, discolored, have holes or tears.

8. Avoid accidental injuries that can be caused by needles, scalpel blades, laboratory instruments, etc. when performing procedures, cleaning instruments, handling sharp instruments, and disposing of used needles, pipettes, etc.
9. Used needles, disposable syringes, scalpel blades, pipettes and other sharp items are to be placed in puncture resistant containers marked with a biohazard symbol for disposal.

Infection control is an important and ongoing concern for healthcare workers. By observing universal precautions, workers can protect themselves and others by preventing the transmission of disease.